

Chapter 55

Michael Learns a Bit about Reginald

After Senior had been led away, Reginald stood there in shock. It had never occurred to him that his grandfather, someone he had practically worshiped his whole life, could have contemplated any illegal activity but he also knew that the national law enforcement agencies didn't just walk in and arrest someone without thoroughly investigating any claims of impropriety against that person.

Meanwhile, Michael, who had watched as Senior was led away, turned and looked at Amanda with a small smile on his face. Amanda saw the smile and looked at him curiously. He walked to her bedside and, ignoring the fact that her mother could see, he bent down, and gave her a gentle kiss.

"I'm sorry," Michael said,

Amanda said, "Why, Michael? Why did you act like that? You could have told me what you were going to do."

"I had to do that, Sweetheart. I needed your reactions to be honest and natural. Mr. Reynard's no fool. He would have seen through any attempt by you to act rather than react. I didn't want him to realize that I had found the escape clause and, if your reactions to what I said hadn't been natural, he would have figured out the truth and he could have thwarted my plans."

"All that matters is that I'm free and we can get married."

"About that."

Immediately, Amanda became scared and worried, "Michael?"

"It's music to my ears." Michael smiled mischievously.

"Oooh! You! When I get out of this bed, I'm going to bite you harder than I've ever bitten you before."

"Are you threatening me with a good time?"

Amanda shook her head and said, "One of these days, I'm going to learn to not get into a battle of wits with you."

Michael smiled again and looked toward Reginald and the Haryla brothers. He said, "You're still here?"

Even though it was said in a friendly tone of voice, Reginald thought that Michael was telling him to leave. "I'm sorry. I'll leave."

"Whoa there, big boy. That isn't what I meant. I meant that I'm surprised that the three of you didn't accompany Mr. Reynard as he was led away." Personally, I don't care if you stay. Hold on a

second.”

Michael returned his attention to Amanda saying, “Princess, I rushed right over here after I got off work so I’m going to the cafeteria and eat dinner.

“Come on, Reginald. I’ll treat all of you to dinner.” Michael walked out of the room as he spoke without looking back because he knew Reginald would follow out of habit.

After Michael, Reginald, Alphonse, and Ryan left the room, Ophelia stared at the door for several seconds. Finally, she said, “Michael must really love you, Amanda.”

Amanda and Jacob looked at each other in shock. Then, Jacob said, “What did you say, Ophelia?”

“I said, ‘He must really love you, Amanda.’”

Amanda said, “No, Mother. You said, ‘Michael must really love you, Amanda.’ You called him Michael not human.”

“That’s his name isn’t it?”

Jacob said, “Yes, but, you’ve always called him ‘human’ instead of Michael.”

“Maybe I’ve been wrong all this time,” she said as she bent down and kissed Amanda’s cheek.

Michael, Reginald, Alphonse, and Ryan reached the cafeteria. As they entered, the cashier, a thylacosmilus, looked up and said, “Hello, Mr. Thomson. How are you today?”

“Margaret, I’m doing fantastically well. I just got Amanda out of an arranged marriage she didn’t want to be in.”

“I bet she’s happy about that.”

“She is. As soon as the contract was declared void, she started planning out wedding.”

“Margaret laughed and turned her attention to Reginald, “Hello Mr. Reynard. I believe this is the first time I’ve ever seen you in here.”

“Yes, ma’am. I’m normally at home at this time. So, I’ve never eaten here before. If you’ll excuse me.”

“Of course. Enjoy your meal.”

“Thank you.”

Reginald and the Haryla brothers quickly caught up with Michael. Reginald said, “You actually spoke with the help.”

“That’s right, Reginald. I always speak the the help. It makes them feel good and more likely to do whatever it takes to make you enjoy your visit.

“Now, pick whatever you want and I’ll pay for it.”

They got in line and picked up their trays and utensils. Reginald said, “I’ve never eaten in a restaurant like this before. What do I do?”

“Well, while technically this is a restaurant, in actuality, it’s a cafeteria. Just follow me and I’ll show you how to get your food desires fulfilled.”

Michael put his tray on the shelf and pushed it toward the first station, the meat station. Michael smiled at the attendant, a Kodiak brown bear, and said, “Good evening, Mike. How’s your day been?”

Reginald looked at the name badge on the attendant’s shirt and saw “Michael” written on it. He whispered to Michael, “Michael, his name tag says, ‘Michael’.”

“I know. When I first started eating here and met Mike, we realized how confusing a conversation between us would be if we called each other Michael so, he told me to call him Mike while he continued to call me Michael.

“Now, at this station, we have a selection of meats. You tell Mike what you’d like. Today it would seem that our choices are prime rib, sirloin steak, roast chicken, roast pork, fried shrimp, and a couple of kinds of fish.”

Michael looked at Mike and said, “Mike, I believe I’ll have some chicken and fried shrimp.”

Mike replied, as he placed the requested meat on a plate, “Yes, sir. What about you, Mr. Reynard?”

Reginald looked at the offerings and said, “I guess I’ll have some prime rib.”

“Is that all, sir?”

“Yes. Thank you.”

“Very good.” Mike turned to Alphonse and Ryan after handing Reginald his plate. “What will

you gentlemen have?”

Ryan said, “I’ve always heard sirloin steak is good. I’ll try that.”

Alphonse said, “What kind of fish do you have?”

“We have fried catfish, flounder, whiting, and broiled red grouper. All farm raised.”

“I’ll have the grouper.”

“Yes, sir.” Mike handed each of them a plate with their meat selection.

After leaving the meat station, they visited the vegetable, dessert, and drink stations. At each station, Michael greeted the server and explained what was available. He also told them to request anything and everything they wanted. Reginald, Alphonse, and Ryan were each a little hesitant about doing that. Reginald was hesitant because he had never eaten in a cafeteria and Alphonse and Ryan were hesitant because they had limited funds.

When Michael saw how little food they had, he said, “Aren’t y’all hungry?”

Alphonse said, ““We weren’t expecting to be eating out for dinner so we didn’t bring much money.”

Michael glared at them before saying, “Guys, I said it’s my treat. Come on.” He led them back through the line and said, “Now, pick what you want. Please!”

Reginald was shocked at how Michael treated the gorilla brothers. When they returned with properly filled plates, Michael said, “What about you, Reginald? What’s your excuse?”

“Michael, I’ve never eaten in a place like this. I’m not sure I’ll like the food.”

“All right, that’s a good and reasonable excuse but, I’ll guarantee you’ll like it.”

They walked over to the cashier, this one a capybara, who recognized Michael and said, “Hello Mr. Thomson. Welcome back.”

“Hello, Rita. I hope you’re having a wonderful day.”

“Oh, I am. My husband is returning from a business trip to Washingstone and my son is going to be on a weekend trip with some friends.”

“That’s great, Rita. How long has your husband been gone?”

With an exasperated sight, Rita said, “Too long.”

Michael couldn’t resist, “Does your husband returning from his trip have anything to do with your son going on the weekend trip?”

With an impish smile, Rita said, “M-m-ma-a-aybe.” Then she giggled.

“Rita, did you miss your husband?”

“Desperately!”

Returning to her job, she said, “That’ll be ten Yenars, Michael.”

“Oh! Put theirs on my bill, too, please.”

She rang everyone’s meal up and said, “That’ll be 46 Yenars and 65 Dounds, Michael.”

After Michael paid for their meals, they found a table and sat down. Michael gave a small blessing over his food and watched everyone else eating. Ryan cut a small piece off of his steak and put it into his mouth. It amused Michael to see the look of sheer ecstasy on Ryan’s face as the flavors of the seasoning reached his tongue. The look caused Michael to smile broadly. He looked at Alphonse as he ate his broiled grouper. Even though Alphonse’s look of happiness wasn’t as ecstatic as Ryan’s, it was a look of pleasure that told Michael how much he loved his fish. Michael then looked at Reginald. Reginald’s face held a look of shocked happiness.

Michael said, “Well, how is everyone’s food?”

Reginald said, “It’s surprisingly good for cafeteria food.”

Alphonse and Ryan smiled happily. Alphonse said, “Michael, my brother and I would like to thank you for paying for our meal. We will repay you as soon as we can.”

Michael replied, “Alphonse, you don’t repay a kindness, you pass it on.”

Reginald said, “Pass it on?”

“Yes. Somewhere, there’s someone that could use a kindness that only you can give him or her. If you happen to meet this person, if you can give them the assistance they need, do it. That’s how you repay a kindness that was done for you. Michael was looking directly at Reginald as he spoke. “I’ve been repaying a kindness that was done for me 20,000 years ago ever since I started working at SoGa Industries and started receiving a regular paycheck. Paying for your meals is just the most recent kindness I’ve given to repay that one.”

Reginald, who noticed Michael looking at him, said, “Are you trying to tell me something?”

“Let’s just say that your grandfather could have had some company when he left.”

Reginald thought for a moment and then said, “Is there anyone in particular you think I should pass your kindness on to?”

“You know exactly whom I’m thinking of, Reginald.”

Reginald sat in silence as Michael continued to eat. Alphonse and Ryan sat and watched Reginald. Finally, after a few moments, Michael finished his meal. He looked from one to the other of them.

“What?” Michael asked.

Alphonse and Ryan remained quiet but Reginald said, “Enlighten me, please.”

“Are you sure you want me to air your dirty laundry in front of these two fine gentlemen, Reginald?”

Reginald was thinking, “*Does he know about her? If he does, how does he know?*” Finally, he said, “I’m not sure I know what you’re talking about but, just in case you know, no, I’d rather you not talk about it.”

Michael smiled and said, “You really should do something about it, though.”

Reginald sat in silence as he ate his dessert.

A few minutes later, everyone had finished eating. They stood and Michael shook everyone's hand and said to Reginald, “Remember what I said, Reginald. Otherwise, I do know what to say to get your attention.”

Reginald just glared at Michael as Michael smiled back at him.

A couple of weeks later, Michael had an errand to run not far from the home of the parents of Raul Lobo-Rojo. As he was leaving the building, a motion caught his eye. He turned his head and saw Reginald Reynard, III, looking around the corner of a building at the end of the block. Curiosity driven, he walked up behind Reginald. Although he walked quietly, he wasn’t attempting to sneak up on Reginald.

When he reached Reginald, Michael looked around the corner, too. After he saw what Reginald was looking at, Michael quietly spoke into Reginald’s ear, saying, “She’s very pretty, isn’t she?”

“AAAAAAH! Reginald yelled as he jumped from behind the concealing wall of the building right into the sight of the person he was looking at.

Michael, realizing that Reginald had no desire to be seen by her, followed quickly and pushed Reginald back behind the wall before Rosa Lobo-Rojo could see him.

When she saw and recognized Michael, Rosa called out, “Miguel! Have you come to visit me and Hernando?”

“Hola Rosa! No, I’m here on an errand . But, as soon as I’m finished I can visit you for a few minutes if you would like.”

“I would like that very much.”

“All right. Hopefully, I’ll see you in a few minutes.”

Michael waved and headed back behind the building’s wall to catch up with Reginald. When he caught up with him, Michael could tell that he was none too happy. Despite a desire to smile at how Reginald had reacted, Michael chose a neutral face when he caught up with Reginald. Despite his resolve against smiling, Michael couldn’t resist a small joke.

“Why the long face, Reg?”

“Oh, ha-ha. Very funny. You should be a comedian.

“Why are you calling me ‘Reg’? You promised to stop doing that after our previous encounter.”

“I’m altering that agreement. Hope that I don’t choose to alter it further.” Michael smiled at the paraphrase of the line from an ancient movie.

Reginald said, “I studied ancient human history. I know that is a thinly veiled alteration of a line from a human movie. Why are you altering your agreement with me.”

“Because you are acting stupid, Reg.”

“What do you mean?”

Michael looked around and saw a familiar cafe, cantina actually. “Reg, we shouldn’t discuss this in the open. Come with me, Reg. I see where we can have some semblance of privacy.”

Michael put his arm around Reginald’s shoulders as he led him across the street. Reginald shrugged Michael’s arm off his shoulders and said, “Don’t worry, Michael. I’ve learned my lesson about refusing to do as you ask. Besides, I want to know why you think I’m acting stupid.”

“All right.”

They arrived at the building. Above the door was a sign that read, “Juanita’s Cantina”. Michael pushed the door open and ushered Reginald inside. In keeping with the stereotypical movie cantina the interior was quite dark despite the number of windows piercing the walls. Michael and Reginald took a moment to allow their eyes to adjust to the darkness. As they stood there, a very familiar female voice called out.

“Miguel, welcome back, mi amigo!”

Michael smiled as he turned toward the voice and replied, “Juanita, mi amor.”

Juanita came up to him and wrapped him in a bear hug. As she hugged him, she said, “Do not say that, Miguel. You have a fiancée and I have a weakness for younger lovers.”

Michael laughed and said “Don’t forget, Juanita, I’m the oldest living thing on Earth. So, if anything, I’m the one who should talk about younger lovers.”

Juanita gave Michael a playful shove, looked over his shoulder and said, “Hola, Señor Reginald. You two are friends?”

“No, ma’am. We aren’t friends we’re . . .”

“Former antagonists.” Michael finished for him.

“Ah. I see. Not friends, but friends maybe?”

Before Reginald could reply, Michael said, “Perhaps. It all depends on how hard-headed this guy decides to be.”

“Si. I understand. He has been standing at that corner over there everyday for the last two weeks. He looks around the corner at her. He thinks she does not know he is there but, she knows.” Reginald looked at her in shock.

“Come. Sit. You two are here to talk and not to this fat, old jaguar.”

Before could reply, Reginald said, “Senora Juanita, you’re not fat and you’re not old. You’re full-figured and mature and I know you’ve got plenty of guys my age who drool over you.”

That set Juanita off into peals of laughter. “Ah, Reginald,” she said, wiping tears from her eyes, “you do know how to make this old jaguar laugh. It is no wonder you were able to charm pequeña Rosa into your bed.” A serious look crossed her face as she added, “However, you did her a great injustice when you denied being her son’s father. Her big brother is seeking a way to exact revenge on you.”

Reginald replied, “I know, Juanita”

Juanita looked at Michael and said, “Do you want your usual, Miguel?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“And you, Reginald?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

Juanita left to bring their drinks to them. After she left, Reginald looked at Michael and said, “She kept calling you, Miguel. Why?”

“Do you know what Miguel means?”

“No, I’m afraid not. I don’t speak very much Mexicat.”

“Well, it isn’t Mexicat, it’s Spanish. Miguel is Spanish for Michael. Not long after we first met, she accidentally called me Miguel in front of Amanda. She realized she had made a mistake and apologized profusely to Amanda. Amanda just smiled and said, ‘It’s all right, Juanita. I know that Miguel is Michael in Spanish.’

“Well, if you two are fine with it, I can’t say anything.”

Juanita returned at this time with their drinks. She handed Michael’s to him saying, “One large sweet iced tea with peach flavoring.” She, then, handed Reginald his, saying, “And one large Mexican coffee, black and sweet. Let me know if you need anything else.” Then, she left.

Michael took a couple of swallows of his tea before saying, “All right, Reg. Out with it. Why were you spying on Rosa and her son?”

“Our son, Michael!”

“Not according to court records, Reg.”

Reginald growled. “If you know that then you know the story.”

“The story is that you bribed a judge to rule in your favor.”

“THAT’S A LIE!” Reginald looked at all the patrons of the cantina staring at them and repeated in a quieter voice. “That’s a lie! It was my grandfather who did that! I wanted to do what was right by Rosa, Michael. I do love her.” Michael could hear the tears in Reginald’s voice as he spoke. “My grandfather didn’t want to ‘sully’ the Reynard bloodline with wolf genes. I’m glad he’s gone!”

“Whoa, whoa, whoa. Wait a minute. What do you mean, ‘he’s gone’?”

“Oh! You didn’t know. After he was taken to the Federal building to be booked, Mr. Ujeko and Mrs. Cachorro do Mato said that he started screaming and berating them all the way. He even threatened them with losing their jobs. He continued this all the way into the detention facility. As is normal procedure, they recorded his rants and believe me, it was a profanity-laced racist rant. As you know, we Humanimals rarely use profanity and even more rarely use racist epithets. It was a lesson we learned to avoid after our creation and listening to how humans would refer to us and each other. But, my grandfather was turning the air blue with his rants. They said they could hear people begging him to calm down but that seemed to make him even angrier. Finally, his words started becoming garbled and incoherent right before a soft thud could be heard. They heard someone calling for the facility’s medical professional. He was taken to Piedmont Regional Medical Facility where he was pronounced DOA. After an autopsy was performed, it was revealed that he had suffered from a major stroke in which seven major arteries had burst at the same time. The Medical Examiner thinks he was dead before he hit the floor. The agents say they never saw him take a breath after he fell to the floor.”

“Well, for what it’s worth, you have my sympathies for the loss of your grandfather.”

“Why? I, for one, don’t miss that racist bastard!”

“Whoa! He was your grandfather, after all.”

“So? I worshiped that man and he treated me and everyone else, including my father and mother, like slaves. I didn’t know what Amanda’s dowry was until the day we were supposed to be married. I’m surprised I wasn’t arrested along with my grandfather.”

“Maybe you had a little divine intervention.”

“Maybe, but I doubt it. Maybe it was more human intervention.”

“Don’t worry about that, Reg. At that time, I would have danced on your grave.”

“But, you bought dinner for me, Alphonse and Ryan.”

“I did but it was after your reaction to the trial of your grandfather’s contract. When I revealed what the dowry was, you were every bit as surprised as Amanda and Mrs. Fuchs.

“Anyway, so you love Rosa?”

“Yes. Michael, you’ve seen her and spoke with her. You know what kind of person she is.

“When I first met her, she was a 16-year-old virgin Mexicat Red Wolf. She was very shy and demur; she would hardly look at me never mind talking to me. She would knock on the door to my room and call out to let me know that she was entering. I would talk to her but she rarely gave me more than a one word response. The more I saw her the more attracted to her I became.

“After about six months, she started to slowly warm up to me. Soon, she was talking to me in her cute Mexicat accent. She was still rather shy and she told me that she was scared of my grandfather because he was always so insulting to her. When I finally got her to sit and talk, I found out how intelligent she is. A couple of weeks later, she allowed me to sit next to her and hold her hand as we talked. One day, I decided to push my luck and gave her a quick kiss. She was shocked but she didn’t leave. All she said was, ‘Señor Reginald, you should not kiss me. I am a maid here.’ She looked at me for a couple of seconds afterward before she leaned over and kissed me. Several days later, we were sitting on my bed and kissing when she suddenly pushed me onto my bed and straddled me. As I looked up at her, she started unbuttoning her blouse and I realized what she was doing. I asked her if she was sure this was what she wanted and she said, “Señor Reginald, a long time ago, I promised myself that I would give my virginity to the special guy who showed me the kind of love that my papa shows my mama every day. You are that special guy.”

Michael said, “And she gave you her virginity?”

“And more.”

“More?”

“Rosa and I started making love two or three times a week. My room had always been the last room she cleaned, so it wasn’t unusual for her to come to my room at the end of the day. When she entered my room, she was all business. She didn’t hurry to my room; she didn’t cut short her work in the other rooms. She acted that way because she was afraid of my grandfather and what he would say or do if he found out about us.

“About three months after we started our love affair, she came to my room as she normally did. I sat at the desk and read one of my books while she cleaned my room. I listened to her clean my room and, after she finished, I knew that she would come over to my desk and kiss me. When she did this, I

picked her up as she put her arms around my neck. I carried her to my bed and, after we undressed, we made love. Afterward, she snuggled as close to me as she could get and I could feel her crying.

“When I asked her why she was crying, she said, ‘I do not know how to tell you this, Reginald, but, I am pregnant.’

“Needless to say, I was shocked. More importantly, my grandfather had been looking for Rosa because she was an hour late leaving. He walked into my room just as I said, ‘Since I made you pregnant, we’ll get married as soon as possible.’

“Grandfather said, ‘Oh, no, you won’t. That is not your child, Reginald! That slut has been sleeping around so she can claim you’re the father and extort money from us to pay for her bastard child!’

“Rosa started crying and said, ‘I would never do that, Reginald. You were my first and my only. All I want is for you to admit that you are my pup’s father.’

“Grandfather said, ‘I won’t have your bastard pup claiming to my my descendant and demanding a cut of my wealth! Alphonse, Ryan! Come throw this slut out of my house!’

“Alphonse and Ryan did as they were ordered and literally threw her out of the house and Grandfather wouldn’t allow her to even put on her bra and panties. Grandfather turned to me and said, ‘That’s how you handle a slut that would leech off of you, Reginald. Don’t ever allow a woman to think you love her or she’ll make all kinds of claims about you to get her dirty, grubby paws on your money.’ Then, he left my room

“After Grandfather left, I looked at Rosa’s clothes that were on my floor and then called Mr. Wiley. When he arrived, I handed him a bag that had Rosa’s clothes in it and told him to go find her, let her get dressed, and take her home. About an hour later, Mr. Wiley returned and told me he had done as I had asked.”

Michael said, “Did your grandfather get mad about what you did?”

“I doubt very seriously he even remembered what he had done by the time he reached the ground floor.”

“Was he addle-brained?”

“Far from it. He just expected people to do as he ordered them to do and then his thoughts went into another direction.”

“I see. So, he had Rosa thrown out of your home and stole her clothing. Tell me about her pup.”

“Six months after the last time I saw her, I got word that Rosa had given birth to our son and had named him Hernando. A few weeks later, a courier arrived with a summons to appear in court concerning the parenthood of Hernando. Grandfather said I didn’t have to worry because he knew that it would be proven that I wasn’t, quote, the father of that wolf slut’s son, unquote.

“When the trial began, Rosa’s lawyer presented an airtight case proving that I was the father of Hernando. He even presented DNA evidence that showed that there was a 99.9% chance that I was the father of Hernando. I was one happy tod after hearing that. Mr. Weaselton produced several guys who claimed to have spent at least one night in bed with Rosa something that Rosa vehemently denied. I believed her then and I believe her now.

“Finally, all the evidence and testimony was given, all except mine that is. Grandfather wouldn’t allow me testify because he was afraid, rightly so, that I would admit to being Hernando’s father. The judge went to his chambers to consider the evidence. Obviously, he had already made up his mind because, in 30 seconds, he returned to the bench and made this ruling. ‘Because the DNA evidence says that there is 0.1% chance that Mr. Reginald Reynard, III, is not the father of Miss Lobo-Rojo’s son and the fact that there are at least 12 men who claim to have engaged in sexual relations with Miss Lobo-Rojo, it is my decision that Reginald Reynard, III, is not the father of Rosa Lobo-Rojo’s son.’”

Michael said, “And you approved of what happened?”

“NO! Michael, I love Rosa. I told Grandfather that I intended to marry her and do the right thing by her and our son.”

“What did he say?”

“‘Go ahead, but, I won’t allow you to bring that slut nor her bastard child into this house.’ Grandfather paused for a moment for emphasis before he continued with, ‘and I’ll disinherit you and you’ll be penniless.’ Then, he smiled like he knew he had me where it hurts the most.”

“Reg, you should have called his bluff.”

“He wasn’t bluffing, Michael. He never bluffed. He produced a legal document prepared by Mr. Weaselton saying that I was officially disinherited from the Reynard family fortune. All it lacked was his signature. Michael, you don’t know what it would be like for me. I didn’t have any means of supporting Rosa and our son without that money.”

Michael smiled and said, “Yes, I do. You’d have to get a job and work like I do.”

Reginald smiled and said, “Yeah. You’re probably right. But, I don’t have to worry about that now, do I?”

Michael laughed. “Yeah. So, what are you going to do, Reg?”

“What do you mean?”

“You just told me that you had told your grandfather that you wanted to do the right thing where Rosa is concerned. Your grandfather can’t stop you any longer; he can no longer disinherit you. So, what’s stopping you from doing the right thing for Rosa. If you don’t do anything else for her, support her financially. It can’t be easy to be a single mother even if you’re living with your parents”

“Who says I don’t help her financially, Michael?”

“What?”

“On the first day of the month, every month since my grandfather threw her out of our house, a courier has arrived at her home. The courier carries a large envelope. Inside the envelope are 50 one hundred Yenar notes totaling 5,000 Yenars.”

“Wow! Should I ask where the money comes from?”

“If you were anyone else, I wouldn’t tell you but, because you are the kind of person I aspire to be, I’ll admit that it comes from a special account I set up a couple of days after Rosa left my life. I put one million Yenars in the account and told the bank to withdraw five thousand, put 50 one hundred Yenar notes into an envelope, hire a bonded courier, and deliver the money to Rosa’s home. I also told them to not put the name of the bank on the envelope nor allow the courier to do more than deliver the envelope and have Rosa sign a receipt. It’s been over three years since I started sending her the money.” A look of sadness crossed Reginald’s face as he added, “I only wish I could deliver it personally. I’d love to know my son.”

Michael looked at Reginald for several seconds before saying, “Are you serious?”

“Yes, why?”

“Are you finished with your coffee?”

Nervously, Reginald said, “Yes.”

Michael drained his glass, stood, and said, “Come with me.”

They walked to the cash register and Michael said, “Juanita, we’re ready to leave. How much do I owe you?”

“Just yours or both?”

“Both.”

“Make sure this one does the right thing by my little Rosa and you will have paid for your drinks.”

Michael put his wallet away and said, “Have no fear, my dear. He will do just that in a very short amount of time,” he looked knowingly at Reginald as he added, “or he’ll pay the price.”